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Oral History Interview: Bill Gillum

Bill Gillum

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WVBH-20

ORAL HISTORY

TAPE 12
HST 354

GIFT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

I, MR. Bill Gillum, the undersigned,
of Logan, County of WVA, State
of WVA, grant, convey, and transfer
to the James E. Morrow Library Associates, a division of
The Marshall University Foundation, INC., an educational and
eleemosynary institution, all my right, title, interest, and
literary property rights in and to my testimony recorded on
April 28, 1984, to be used for scholarly
purposes, including study and rights to reproduction.

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(initial)
_____ Closed for a period of _____ years.
(initial)
_____ Closed for my lifetime.
(initial)
_____ Closed for my lifetime unless special
(initial) permission is gained from me or my
assigns.

DATE April 28, 84

Bill Gillum
(Signature - Interviewee)

Box 239
(Address)

Switzer W. V. 25647

DATE April 28 84

[Signature]
(Signature - Witness)

Gillum, Bill
WVBH-20



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(Signature - Witness)

Gillum, Bill
WVBH-20



ORAL HISTORY OF APPALACHIA
400 Hal Greer Boulevard
Huntington, West Virginia 25755-2667
304/696-6799

4 December 1991

Mr. Bill Gillum
P.O. Box 239
Switzer, WV 25647

Dear Mr. Gillum:

I am writing this letter in regard to an interview conducted by a Marshall University history student, with you on April 28th, 1984 for the Oral History office.

You, at that time, signed a release form, which gives us permission to use your interview for scholarly purposes, but the section where you need to initial has been left blank.

All I need for you to do is sign your initials where I've indicated and return the form to me. If there is a problem or a concern, please feel free to call me at the above number.

We appreciate your interview and I apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you.

Again, thank you for your help in this matter.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Gina Kates
Secretary, Oral History

Encl.



ORAL HISTORY OF APPALACHIA
400 Hal Greer Boulevard
Huntington, West Virginia 25755-2667
304/696-6799

28 January 1992

Mr. Bill Gillum
Box 239
Switzer, WV 25647

Dear Mr. Gillum:

This is just a follow-up of my letter of December 4, 1991, regarding your interview with Eric Shelbourne for the Oral History office regarding your business in Logan.

Would it be possible for you to send me the signed release form I mailed to you at that time?

I apologize again for this inconvenience, but I would like to get your file processed as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Gina Kates
Oral History of Appalachia

GKK:cb

WVBH.20

WEST VIRGINIA BUSINESS HISTORY

AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: Bill Gillum, Bill's Gulf

CONDUCTED BY: Eric Shelbourne

DATE OF INTERVIEW: ^{april} 4-28-84

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Eric: Okay, Mr. Gillum, just start off with some basic questions about uh, your...your business establishment in Logan, how was your business started?

Bill: Well, I worked there for about 5 years back in the late '50's and I assumed the business from the owner; he went into another business and I bought the business from him.

Eric: Oh, I see. Uh, was it...was it in the same location from....that it's been, or have you moved about?

Bill: No, it's been in the same location.

Eric: I see. Uh...of course you are involved in the uh, gasoline business (yes), in what way has the business changed over the years since you took over?

Bill: Well, of course the price of gas has greatly increased. And the volume of gas being sold has increased. Uh, when I first took over the business, gas was really not the main objective of the service station because gas was so cheap, and there wasn't a large profit margin on the gasoline. But things have changed now and now gas is the main bulk of our profit generator.

Eric: Was it...was it that the service of cars and the problems that cars experienced in the repairing of them, is that the main source of business at the time you took over?

Bill: Yes, uh, back then cars were not as complex as they are now. And uh, it was a lot easier to work on someone's car and make a quick buck but now, the only way is to sell the gas.

. But

Eric: I see. Uhm...did you experience...was there a great deal of competition involved in Logan at that time? Were there competitors near by that you....?

Bill: Well, yes, there was a great deal of competition. There was service stations everywhere back then. All through uh, Omar and Logan area, where my business was established and uh, but since then, due to the economy and mostly in these past ten years there's been a very great decline in a number of businesses. There've been a few of the chain franchises established but that has...hasn't hurt us because of the independent dealers are greatly declining or going out of business.

Eric: I see. Uhm, has uh, your experience served as your training and such as far as your experience uh, the long relationship that you've had with this business, does that...that without a doubt serves as a plus in your business..

Bill: Well, yes, I've uh, well established and know uh, most of the people in the community and they deal with me in that aspect.

Eric: I see. Uh, has uh, just going to sales and relating them to uh, to the time that you took over, and both now, have they

increased in any way with the advance of technology, in cars?
Have they advanced or declined?

Eric: Well, they've seemed to advanced greatly but uh, the ...the business now is like I said before, gas, but what I see now is, most of my business now is coming from other businesses instead of independent vehicle operators. It's coming from area coal mines and hydraulic shops that buy gas from me, for their business vehicles, is where most of my profit has been coming from, other than just someone out on a Sunday drive, stopping in for a tank of gas.

The
But

Eric: I see. So, in other words, uh, could you go as far to say that uh, you've expanded into other areas, whereas in the 1950's when you took over, you expanded from the personal service then into the corporate type service of coal mines and stuff?

Bill: Yes.

Eric: I see. Uh, has your profit in this realm been a plus to that of the 1970's?

Bill: Yes.

Eric: I see. Uh, I'd like to ask you a personal question about uh, your opinion of the raise in prices uh, I know that it certainly affected you as far as....but has the demand, the demand of gases is uh, is what's still there. Did you profit from it, the raise in gas prices or

gas

Bill: Well, to a certain extent. Not as much as people think. The independent operator uh, independent operators, when we raise our gas prices, is just because our ...our distributor raised our, the prices we have to pay, the wholesale price of gas and distributors had their price, the price they had to pay for the gas raised also. So, this just...continuous circle of price raising, and we really didn't profit that much. As a matter of fact, it probably hurt because that's when people started conserving their gas. And they didn't buy as much, even though they paid more for their gas, our profit was reduced somewhat, I'd say, but...but that was during the embargo mostly. Now things are startin' to turn around and people are startin' to consume a lot.

Even

Eric: Uh, where does the bulk of your business come from, such as on the individual basis? Is it around from the uh, individual basis?

Bill: Uh, the individual operators of cars that come in are from the community, because we ...there's not very many people drivin' through Logan to vacation. (Laughs) So, it's just...I...probably...know 90% of the clientele when they come in, by name.

Eric: So it's on a personal basis that you deal with these?

Bill: Yes.

Eric: I see. Uh, looking through the uh, going over through the years, uh, from going through the transition of the 1950's, going through the uh, the difficult period involving the war and Korean War that is, and the Vietnam War, uh, you've experienced a great deal of change. Uh, has uh, the people that come in, have you been able to ...to distinguish the people from back then fromthey are now?

Bill: Yeah, there's...we get a lot more kids your age coming in, long hair and drunk, (I see), well, like see, you college kids.

Eric: I see. But are theywere...were the times different from....would you have rather uh, gone back to the '50's or would you stay right now where you are?

Bill: Well uh, all I could...the way it is right now, people are just a lot more open now it seems and uh, right now a lot of unpaid accounts are from younger people; not the people my generation, but still, I...I like it now. I guess because I'm making more money now than I did then.

Eric: Would you uh, call yourself a successful business man out of all that has happened?

Bill: Well, yeah, I'd call myself a success.

Eric: Well, I'd like to thank you forfor taking out the time to interview you. This of course, will be going into the history of appalachian and uh, it will be recorded in uh, in the Oral History Department at Marshall University and I really thank you very much for your time. And I hope that I can run into you again sometime.

Bill: Okay, Eric, thank you. (Thank you)

END OF INTERVIEW